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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/634,992	08/06/2003	James G. McErlean	103864.139US1	7424

28089 7590 12/13/2006

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EXAMINER

DESAI, HEMANT

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3721

DATE MAILED: 12/13/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/634,992

Applicant(s)

MCERLEAN ET AL.

Examiner

Hemant M. Desai

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 16 October 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-92 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 24-29 and 52-71 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-23, 30-51 and 72-92 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

2. Claims 1-3, 7-8, 10-16, 19-20, 30-32, 34, 37-39, 43, 45-49, 73-75, 78-80, 83-85, 87 and 89-91 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Hoffman (4988255).

Hoffman discloses an automated system for emptying contents of pharmaceutical containers (6, fig. 1), comprising a gripper unit (3, 12, fig. 1) for receiving and holding the container (6), a cutter (47, 48, fig. 5) for cutting the pharmaceutical container, a rotating unit (guide 79-80, fig. 9) operable with the gripper unit (12) that rotates at least a portion of the gripper unit to empty the contents of the container, which meets all the claimed limitations.

Regarding claims 2-3 and 43, Hoffman discloses a robot (see col. 3, lines 27-28; col. 6, lines 38-39) for placing the container in the gripper unit.

Regarding claims 7-8 and 45, Hoffman discloses that the contents of the container are emptied into a bulk-up container (see col. 6, lines 3-5).

Regarding claim 10, Hoffman discloses that the cutter comprises a blade (47) that moves in a direction substantially parallel to a belt of the conveyor.

Regarding claims 11 and 46, Hoffman discloses that a rod less air cylinder is used to facilitate movement of the cutter.

Regarding claims 12-13, 34 and 47-48, Hoffman discloses to place the cut portion in a waste repository (see col. 5, lines 38-53).

Regarding claim 14, Hoffman discloses that the cut portion is released in a scrap bin (see col. 5, lines 50-53).

Regarding claims 15 and 49, Hoffman discloses a scrap chute (col. 6, lines 11-15) that receives a portion of the pharmaceutical container subsequent to emptying the contents of the pharmaceutical container.

Regarding claim 16, Hoffman discloses that the scrap chute to place the portion the pharmaceutical container held by the gripper unit in a scrap bin (see col. 6, lines 10-15).

Regarding claims 19 and 20, Hoffman discloses that the gripper unit comprises first and second interlocking fingers (side walls of the slots 3).

Regarding claim 30, Hoffman discloses, as mentioned above, the automated system for emptying the contents of pharmaceutical containers (6, fig. 1), comprising means (3, 12, figs. 1-2) for receiving and holding a container, means (47, 48) for cutting the container, means for rotating (79, 80) at least a portion of the means for receiving (12) and holding to empty the contents of the pharmaceutical container.

Regarding claims 31-32, Hoffman discloses means for placing and transporting (col. 6, lines 36-40) for placing the container (6) in the means for receiving and holding.

Regarding claim 37, Hoffman, as mentioned above, discloses the automated system for emptying the contents of pharmaceutical containers, comprising a gripper unit for receiving and holding a pharmaceutical container, a cutter for cutting the pharmaceutical container and a control system for controlling the operation of gripper unit and the cutter.

Regarding claim 38, Hoffman discloses a rotating unit (79, 80), operable with the gripper and the control system (90) that rotates at least a portion of the gripper unit empty the contents of the container.

Regarding claim 39, Hoffman discloses the control system (90, fig. 1). Therefore a keyboard, control logic, a display, and a processing unit in inherent part of the control system.

Regarding claims 73, 78, 83 and 89 Hoffman discloses that the container is placed in the gripper unit any cotton can be removed.

Regarding claims 75, 80, 85 and 91 Hoffman discloses that the system comprising a pill accumulation chute (see col. 6, lines 3-4).

Regarding claim 87, Hoffman discloses, as mentioned above, an automated system for emptying contents of pharmaceutical containers (6) including medications, comprising a gripper unit (3) for receiving and holding a pharmaceutical container, a cutter (47-48) for cutting the pharmaceutical container and removing a portion therefrom (52) forming an exit section in the container such that the contents are capable of

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exiting therefrom, and rotating unit (79-80) operable with the gripper unit that rotates at least a portion of the gripper unit to empty the contents of the pharmaceutical container and generates a rotational force responsive to the rotation to empty the contents therewith.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 4-6, 33, 44, 72, 77, 82 and 88-89 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoffman in view of McGrath et al. (6494017).

Hoffman, as mentioned above, discloses all the claimed limitations, except for a vision system (means for viewing). However, McGrath et al. teach a vision system (3, fig. 20) for rejecting out of shape containers from the conveyors (see col. 4, lines 37-67). Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide vision system as taught by McGrath et al. in the automated system for emptying contents of Hoffman for rejecting out of shape containers from the conveyors.

Regarding claim 89, Hoffman discloses that the container is placed in the gripper unit any cotton can be removed.

5. Claim 9 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoffman in view of Blaimschein (5318420).

Hoffman, as mentioned above, discloses all the claimed limitations, except for an ultrasonic cutter. However, Blaimschein teaches an ultrasonic cutter to permit an economical and accurate cutting of work-pieces made of any desired polymers or fiber-reinforced polymers with a high efficiency and a low loss of material. Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide the ultrasonic cutter as taught by Blaimschein in the automated system for emptying contents of Hoffman to permit an economical and accurate cutting of work-pieces with a high efficiency and a low loss of material.

6. Claims 17-18, 35, 50, 76, 81, 86 and 92 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoffman in view of Kitamura et al. (5423216).

Hoffman, as mentioned above, discloses all the claimed limitations, except for a sensor system to determine when the contents of the container are no longer being emptied. However, Kitamura et al. teaches sensor system (7, fig. 4; comprises a light emitter, see col. 6, lines 67-68; col. 7, lines 1-2) to determine the contents of funnel (4, fig. 4) are no longer being emptied to activate the scrapper assembly (8, fig. 4). Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide sensor system to determine when the contents of the container are no longer being emptied as taught by Kitamura et al. in the automated system for emptying contents of Hoffman to determine when the contents of the container are no longer being emptied to activate the discharge chute traverse assembly to expose the bottle to expose the bottle discharge chute.

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7. Claims 21-23, 36 and 51 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoffman in view of Yuyama et al. (6644504).

Hoffman, as mentioned above, discloses all the claimed limitations, except for detection system to detect the container is no longer being held by the gripper unit. However, Yuyama et al. teaches a detection system (sensor 8a, fig. 2a) to detect the container (11, fig. 2a) is no longer being held by the vessel holder (8, fig. 2a). Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide sensor system to detect the container is no longer being held by the gripper unit as taught by Yuyama et al. in the automated system for emptying contents of Hoffman to detect the container is no longer being held by the gripper unit.

Regarding claim 23, Hoffman discloses that the container can be of different shapes and sizes (see col. 2, lines 58-61).

8. Claims 40-42 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hoffman in view of Coughlin (2004/0059463).

Hoffman, as mentioned above, discloses all the claimed limitations, except for an indicia reader that interfaces with the control system. However, Coughlin teaches an indicia reader (282, fig. 13), which interfaces with control system (28, figs. 9 and 13) to retrieve the information about pharmaceutical (paragraph 0031). Therefore it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to provide the indicia reader that interfaces with the control system as taught by

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Coughlin in the automated system for emptying contents of Hoffman to retrieve the information about pharmaceutical.

Response to Arguments

9. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-23 and 30-51 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

10. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Hemant M. Desai whose telephone number is (571) 272-4458. The examiner can normally be reached on 6:30 AM-5:00 PM, Mon-Thurs..

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Rinaldi I. Rada can be reached on (571) 272-4467. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Hemant M. Desai

HEMANT M. DESAI
PRIMARY EXAMINER

12/5/06